

Mechanics

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Your Fate

You have a part to play in this story. You have three events that are fated to happen. These define your role. You need to make an intruder involved in each event. This will help make them part of the story, and help keep the world together.

In the central ballroom, you will find the grand clock. Each time you complete one of your fated events, move the hand one hour later, closer toward midnight. When the clock finally hits midnight, your reality will reset itself and become a bit more stable. If you have failed to complete your fates by midnight, then you will suffer at the hands of the living god. It is imperative that you complete your fates and keep the story on track.

Fated Events

- Convince an intruder to pray with you in the name of the old gods. (*Invent worrying promises that they must make to the ancient, inhuman deities as part of this prayer.*)
- Someone reads to me from *The King in Yellow*. The text of the play eats at my mind, making me lose all faith in the old gods.
- Someone writes for me a missive that confesses my sins, then sees that it gets into the hands of the queen. Then I can commit suicide by leaping from the balcony, my sins having been exposed. (*Invent a litany of sins as you confess.*)

High Priest Naotalba

Place of Power:
The Torture Chamber

Carcosa

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- to cause these events to happen in the most surprising and dramatic way possible
- to be creepy, mysterious and tempting toward the intruders.
- when another character performs a service for you, you are obligated to answer one question of theirs honestly, as best you can. If that question is from an intruder trying to find a way out of *Carcosa*, you use your divination cards to answer.

Special Rule: Blind

Your character cannot see. You can navigate *Carcosa* relatively well through instinct, and identify people, but you cannot make out details, read written texts, identify colors or symbols (such as the Yellow Sign). You will be provided with a blindfold for this purpose (which you should be able to see through).

High Priest Naotalba

"Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins." —Hebrews 10:11

You are the blind high priest of the Old Gods, the moral center of the city. You stand as the bulwark against sin and wickedness that would otherwise overwhelm the city. In these decadent times, the people have abandoned the sacrifices to the insect gods that preserved our kingdom for centuries. The heretical cult of the King in Yellow spreads across the city. Your inquisitors attempt to hunt down these forbidden beliefs. Nonetheless, the heathens still spread their gospel of a prophet called the Phantom of Truth who will mark the way for their living god. Few things anger you more than this cult of unorthodox beliefs, undermining the temple's authority in the kingdom. You have gone to great lengths to stop them, and many times you have stepped over moral lines that others might refuse to cross.

You present a pious front, arguing that your actions are necessary to defeat the heathens. But the truth is that you have long since abandoned your faith in the Old Gods. You don't believe that your prayers are being heard by anything. You only maintain the rituals because your role as head priest gives you political power. As the lead religious figure in the city, you have access to the royal family. The high priest of the Old Gods has always had the ear of the ruler of *Carcosa*. If the cult of the King in Yellow continues to spread like a disease across the kingdom, then you might lose your prestige.



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Fated Events

- At my request, an outsider chooses a new heir to take the throne of the kingdom.
- An outsider must bear witness against a heretic or murderer, so that I may sentence the criminal to death.
- I and one other must make a terrible sacrifice to bring my dead husband back from the dead. (*They choose what to sacrifice. I must roleplay loss of the same thing they sacrifice, until the clock next strikes midnight. They receive the Possessed by the King's Ghost card.*)

Queen Cassilda

Place of Power:
The Grand Ballroom

Carcosa

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Queen Cassilda

Your husband, King Aldones, has been poisoned. Even now he lays dead in the crypt beneath the palace, and his murderer still stalks the city. With no ruler, the city has fallen into chaos. A plague has befallen the city. The heretical cult of the King in Yellow spreads through dissidents in the city. Already, they incite the various factions into violent conflict and riots. If you look out the tower window, you can see the city burning, dying in the distance.

By ancient tradition, you must choose one of your children to be the new ruler of Carcosa before the night is through. Only thus can you restore order to your doomed city. Yet neither child is acceptable as ruler. Camilla is flighty, too easily swayed, while Thale is overly ambitious and not as crafty as he believes. Yet without someone to sit on the throne of Yhtill, the city will fall into chaos and the wicked worshippers of the King in Yellow will come to rule this land.

And still your husband's murderer roams free. The killer must be found and put to justice, through any means possible.



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Fated Events

– Camilla asks a stranger if they are the Phantom of Truth, and they answer affirmatively. (*Give them the "Phantom of Truth card."*)

– Camilla asks another to unmask and they identify that they wear no mask. (*Give them the "No Mask" card.*)

You: "You, sir; should unmask."

Them: "I wear no mask."

You: (Terrified.) "No mask? No mask?"

– The prophecies of the Phantom of Truth must be made to come true.

Princess Camilla

**Place of Power:
The Hidden Shrine**

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You are an inhabitant of the alien city of *Carcosa*. Once, on some distant planet or perhaps a different dimension, the city of Carcosa was visited by the malevolent living god known as the King in Yellow. Your world was unable to handle the stress of the King's presence, and it shattered into pieces. Ever since, the tattered remnants of your world are stuck in a loop. Across the eons, each inhabitant of the world has played through the events of your final night, over and over. In time, the city of Carcosa settled into a stable loop: you each play out your part and, at the end of each night, the King in Yellow arrives. Then the world resets to the beginning of the evening, and you repeat.

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Princess Camilla

Your father, King Aldones, died recently under mysterious circumstances. Overcome with grief, you withdrew from ordinary court politics. In seclusion, you came to discover the forbidden text *The King In Yellow*. This play foretells the coming of a living god who will remake the world in his own image. The heretical worship of the King in Yellow is forbidden by the old priests of the city. Even now the temple's inquisitors search the city for worshippers of the King in Yellow to execute. The Queen blames every misfortune on the worshippers of the King: the plague that sweeps through the city, the death of your father, anything that goes wrong. Yet the teachings of the cult give you comfort and hope for the future of the city.

Based on your readings of the omen in the book, the time of the King is at hand. Soon the Phantom of Truth, herald of the King in Yellow, shall appear before the court to utter prophecies. When those prophecies have been fulfilled, then the time has come for the living god to take the entire kingdom of Carcosa into his being. You wish to gain as many converts to the King's religion, without your mother or High Priest Naotalba discovering your new faith.



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Fated Events

- Someone must gather together seven of the scattered pages of *The King in Yellow* and burn them.
- Someone must say my name three times.

Once you have accomplished those acts, you will have your memory restored and attain tangible human form. Thereafter, you follow the rules for cast members instead of inhabitants. Consult with a GM.

The Author

Place of Power:
None

Carcosa

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The Author

Once, you were a regular person, a writer named Cameron Iokannnon. Once, you had hopes and dreams and a regular life. That seems very long ago now. You read a play called *The King in Yellow*.

Or maybe you lived those events. Maybe you wrote it. Your memories are confused now. You've faded away until you're almost nothing at all.

Writing.

You were definitely writing... something. It is important that you finish the story. Your story must be told. The story traps you, though. As long as you continue the story, you remain a prisoner here as much as the characters themselves. Only someone from outside your story could rescue you from the narrative prison of your own construction.

But who are these new characters who enter, stage left?



Special Rule: Barely There

Until your fates are accomplished, you are mute, intangible and invisible. The only thing you can directly interact with is the written word. You have a stack of blue pages containing a lot of written words, and a red pen. You can use the red pen to mark on these pages and leave them for the other players to find. You can't write out words, but you can circle, underline, cross out or otherwise pick out individual words and phrases on each page. If you locate pages of the play *The King in Yellow* (marked with The Yelooow Sign), then you can use the red pen on those as well.

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Fated Events

- Someone sells their sense of self worth
- Someone sells their courage
- Someone sell their sanity

The Merchant

Place of Power:
The Shore of Lake Hali

Carcosa

You are an inhabitant of the alien city of *Carcosa*. Once, on some distant planet or perhaps a different dimension, the city of Carcosa was visited by the malevolent living god known as the King in Yellow. Your world was unable to handle the stress of the King's presence, and it shattered into pieces. Ever since, the tattered remnants of your world are stuck in a loop. Across the eons, each inhabitant of the world has played through the events of your final night, over and over. In time, the city of Carcosa settled into a stable loop: you each play out your part and, at the end of each night, the King in Yellow arrives. Then the world resets to the beginning of the evening, and you repeat.

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The Merchant

Once, you may have been an ordinary man, a travelling salesman and aspiring author named Mark Roark. Following the German occupation of Virginia, you came across a curious book entitled *The King in Yellow*. After reading it, the events of the play began to intrude into your life, until the King in Yellow himself arrived in New York and your world dissolved into madness and chaos. When you try to think of your past, you experience sudden discomfort. Your world was destroyed, and any connection to it, even a hint of memory, threatens to undo you as well. Over your time in Carcosa, you have sold off most of what made you the human being Mark Roark. It's better for you to ignore your past as a mortal man. Instead, you focus on your existence here as a merchant in Carcosa. As long as you play your part, you won't suffer.

You are a Merchant, one that specializes in intangible goods. Inhabitants of Carcosa sometimes approach you looking to purchase some courage or hope and in exchange they give you their abilities or dreams. Sometimes the royal family purchases fear and regret and the like for use in their torture chambers. So you always have a use for nearly any emotion or aspect of humanity. But the natives are stuck in their ways, unlikely to make any purchases from you. These newcomers to the city, though, they seem like they will be easy marks. Loads of profit to be made there.



At the beginning of play, you have a variety of abstract goods in stock. Your inventory will shift and change over the game. It does not reset when the King comes. Of course, you don't give away merchandise. Even a simple answer comes at a price.

You can accept any intangible as payment, provided that you make an arrangement with the seller. But you must make an exchange of goods to transfer intangibles. Nothing in this world is free.

Mechanics

Carcosa's laws are those of secrets and answers, not physics. The most important rule in this place is that all services must be rewarded with information. When another character does something as you request, you must honestly answer one question for them. For most questions, answer simply based on your knowledge and your character background. When a cast member asks you a question related to their escape, though, that question is special. As an inhabitant of Carcosa, you have a mystical, intuitive knowledge that allows you to answer these questions (*using the answer cards*). When asked an escape question, you give the cast member the answer card that you find most interesting, dramatic or applicable to their question. If necessary, make up an explanation of how the card fits with the question. If the question is a How question, you're free to make up any answer that fits with the previous answers. If possible, you want to force them into difficult personal decisions or dealing with personal demons. If you have no more answer cards remaining, then you can give any answer you want, just as with the How questions. (*This is a good time to make the answer particularly nasty or troubling or to tie it into the events of the game so far.*) You can't answer two questions in a row from the same intruder. Carcosa keeps its secrets better than that.

One last thing: don't tell the intruders any of this unless you have to to answer a question or to fulfill your task. If they understand the rules, they may not want to play your little game.

Pushing

There is no conflict in Carcosa. The only way to force someone to do something they don't want to do is by "Pushing."

You can only push while in your "Place of Power". You can only Push once each cycle. You get one Push, then you have to wait until the King in Yellow arrives. When the King comes, everything resets to the start, and you get another push that you can use.

When you Push, tell the other player that you're doing so and describe what you want their character to do. At that point, the other player has to choose one of three options: they can *Comply*, *Flee* or *Push Back*.

- If they *Comply*, they must do as you outlined.
- If they *Flee*, they sacrifice one of their own cards and exit the area. You cannot pursue them until you've interacted with someone else first.
- If they *Push Back*, then they describe and act out fighting back against you in whatever way is appropriate. They sacrifice one of their own cards and then make their own demand on you. At that point, you must Comply (because you've already spent your Push for this cycle.)

Your Fate

You have a part to play in this story. You have three events that are fated to happen. These define your role. You need to make an intruder involved in each event. This will help make them part of the story, and help keep the world together.

In the central ballroom, you will find the grand clock. Each time you complete one of your fated events, move the hand one hour later, closer toward midnight. When the clock finally hits midnight, your reality will reset itself and become a bit more stable. If you have failed to complete your fates by midnight, then you will suffer at the hands of the living god. It is imperative that you complete your fates and keep the story on track.

Fated Events

- I lose to someone at chess. (*To beat me, someone must have the Chessmaster ability, must solve one of my chess puzzles or must Push me into losing.*)
- Someone delivers to the queen this letter that I forged, which purports to be a confession of treason from Princess Camilla.
- Someone accepts thirty silver from me as payment to assassinate the queen. (*They don't actually have to assassinate the queen. Only making the contract is sufficient for you to owe them their answer. But you needn't tell them that.*)

Prince Thale

Place of Power:
The Empty Grave

Carcosa

You are an inhabitant of the alien city of *Carcosa*. Once, on some distant planet or perhaps a different dimension, the city of Carcosa was visited by the malevolent living god known as the King in Yellow. Your world was unable to handle the stress of the King's presence, and it shattered into pieces. Ever since, the tattered remnants of your world are stuck in a loop. Across the eons, each inhabitant of the world has played through the events of your final night, over and over. In time, the city of Carcosa settled into a stable loop: you each play out your part and, at the end of each night, the King in Yellow arrives. Then the world resets to the beginning of the evening, and you repeat.

But now something has happened. Somehow, your fragment of a world has come into contact with our world. Now our world's inhabitants are throwing your stable loop off balance. If these earthly intruders aren't incorporated into the cycle, then your world will crumble. The tattered world of Carcosa is already a shred. Any further strain on it and it will fall apart altogether.

You need to save yourselves. You need to restore order. You need to make these newcomers part of your story. This will lessen the strain on reality. Only when the intruders have become part of your story can Carcosa stabilize and survive.

As a player, your job has several parts:

- to cause these events to happen in the most surprising and dramatic way possible
- to be creepy, mysterious and tempting toward the intruders.
- when another character performs a service for you, you are obligated to answer one question of theirs honestly, as best you can. If that question is from an intruder trying to find a way out of Carcosa, you use your divination cards to answer.

Prince Thale

You are the ambitious, young prince, rightful heir to the throne of Yhtill. You like to think that you are a ruthless and cunning manipulator willing to do anything to get what you want. In reality, you're not as smart as you would like to think, and it is impossible to manipulate the others whom you've deceived thousands of times before. The newcomers to Carcosa, though, might be easy marks to con into fulfilling your goals.

What you want most is to be named heir to the throne. Your father, King Aldones, died some months ago. The kingdom has been in chaos, with no monarch on the throne. Yet your mother, Queen Cassilda, continues to mourn her husband's death and refuses to name a new heir to the throne. It is her sacred duty to choose a competent, capable leader such as yourself to take the crown. Yet Princess Camilla, your sister, is in line for the throne as well, and your mother has yet to decide which of you will be ruler of Carcosa. Your father's death is your chance to seize the power you've always craved. You can't let this opportunity go to waste. Someone must sit on the throne before the night is through, and that someone is going to be *you*.



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One last thing: don't tell the intruders any of this unless you have to to answer a question or to fulfill your task. If they understand the rules, they may not want to play your little game.

Pushing

As an intangible Spirit, you can neither push nor be pushed.

Your Fate

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Fated Events

- Convince someone they cannot trust their ally.
- Convince someone what they thought was true is not.
- Make someone hesitate to act when the path should be clear.

Carcosa

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Spirit of Doubt

You might be an actual spirit, or you might just be stray thoughts in people's heads. If at all possible, leave it ambiguous. You flutter through the game, invisible and intangible, merely making suggestions and comments to one player at a time, trying to advance your goals of negative feelings.

When the King in Yellow comes, you stand to the side, invisible and unaffected. But when someone does you a favor and you answer a question, you still advance the clock.



Special Rule: Barely There

You don't have any ability to directly influence the world, except by whispering promises to people. You can answer people's questions truthfully, if they first perform a service for you. This means that they have to fulfill one of your fated events.

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Mechanics

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Your Fate

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Fated Events

- Make someone run from a threat they should face.
- Make someone freeze in place while danger approaches.
- Convince someone that something harmless is a threat to them.

Carcosa

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Spirit of Fear

You might be an actual spirit, or you might just be stray thoughts in people's heads. If at all possible, leave it ambiguous. You flutter through the game, invisible and intangible, merely making suggestions and comments to one player at a time, trying to advance your goals of negative feelings.

When the King in Yellow comes, you stand to the side, invisible and unaffected. But when someone does you a favor and you answer a question, you still advance the clock.



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Your Fate

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Fated Events

- Convince someone they cannot trust their ally.
- Convince someone to spread malicious rumors about a third party.
- Make someone denounce and attack the traitor in their midst.

Spirit of Suspicion

Carcosa

You are a spirit of the alien city of *Carcosa*. Once, on some distant planet or perhaps a different dimension, the city of Carcosa was visited by the malevolent living god known as the King in Yellow. Your world was unable to handle the stress of the King's presence, and it shattered into pieces. Ever since, the tattered remnants of your world are stuck in a loop. Across the eons, each inhabitant of the world has played through the events of your final night, over and over. In time, the city of Carcosa settled into a stable loop: you each play out your part and, at the end of each night, the King in Yellow arrives. Then the world resets to the beginning of the evening, and you repeat.

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Spirit of Suspicion

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When the King in Yellow comes, you stand to the side, invisible and unaffected. But when someone does you a favor and you answer a question, you still advance the clock.



Special Rule: Barely There

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Your Fate

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Fated Events

- Convince someone to harm themselves, physically or mentally (make a sacrifice).
- Convince someone to sacrifice one of their own resources in place of another person's.
- Convince someone to make a human sacrifice out of another character.

Carcosa

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Spirit of Sacrifice

You might be an actual spirit, or you might just be stray thoughts in people's heads. If at all possible, leave it ambiguous. You flutter through the game, invisible and intangible, merely making suggestions and comments to one player at a time, trying to advance your goals of negative feelings.

When the King in Yellow comes, you stand to the side, invisible and unaffected. But when someone does you a favor and you answer a question, you still advance the clock.



Special Rule: Barely There

You don't have any ability to directly influence the world, except by whispering promises to people. You can answer people's questions truthfully, if they first perform a service for you. This means that they have to fulfill one of your fated events.

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Mechanics

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Pushing

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Your Fate

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Fated Events

- Convince someone that their quest is hopeless and futile.
- Convince someone that they are incapable of facing the challenges ahead (*sacrifice their self-worth*).
- Make someone stare into the yellow void where black stars rise, until they go mad (*sacrifice their sanity*).

Carcosa

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Spirit of Doom

You might be an actual spirit, or you might just be stray thoughts in people's heads. If at all possible, leave it ambiguous. You flutter through the game, invisible and intangible, merely making suggestions and comments to one player at a time, trying to advance your goals of negative feelings.

When the King in Yellow comes, you stand to the side, invisible and unaffected. But when someone does you a favor and you answer a question, you still advance the clock.



Special Rule: Barely There

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Fated Events

- Convince someone that they should despise the one that they wish to protect.
- Convince someone to reveal their hatred to the one that they despise.
- Convince someone to strike out against one that they despise.

Carcosa

You are a spirit of the alien city of *Carcosa*. Once, on some distant planet or perhaps a different dimension, the city of Carcosa was visited by the malevolent living god known as the King in Yellow. Your world was unable to handle the stress of the King's presence, and it shattered into pieces. Ever since, the tattered remnants of your world are stuck in a loop. Across the eons, each inhabitant of the world has played through the events of your final night, over and over. In time, the city of Carcosa settled into a stable loop: you each play out your part and, at the end of each night, the King in Yellow arrives. Then the world resets to the beginning of the evening, and you repeat.

But now something has happened. Somehow, your fragment of a world has come into contact with our world. Now our world's inhabitants are throwing your stable loop off balance. If these earthly intruders aren't incorporated into the cycle, then your world will crumble. The tattered world of Carcosa is already a shred. Any further strain on it and it will fall apart altogether.

You need to save yourselves. You need to restore order. You need to make these newcomers part of your story. This will lessen the strain on reality. Only when the intruders have become part of your story can Carcosa stabilize and survive.

As a player, your job has several parts:

- to cause these events to happen in the most surprising and dramatic way possible
- to be creepy, mysterious and tempting toward the intruders.
- when another character performs a service for you, you are obligated to answer one question of theirs honestly, as best you can. If that question is from an intruder trying to find a way out of Carcosa, you use your divination cards to answer.

Spirit of Hate

You might be an actual spirit, or you might just be stray thoughts in people's heads. If at all possible, leave it ambiguous. You flutter through the game, invisible and intangible, merely making suggestions and comments to one player at a time, trying to advance your goals of negative feelings.

When the King in Yellow comes, you stand to the side, invisible and unaffected. But when someone does you a favor and you answer a question, you still advance the clock.



Special Rule: Barely There

You don't have any ability to directly influence the world, except by whispering promises to people. You can answer people's questions truthfully, if they first perform a service for you. This means that they have to fulfill one of your fated events.

You can neither push nor be pushed.